WESTBROOK MUSTER

WESTBROOK Ct

26th Ann'l Muster Aug. 24, 1985

PHOTO BY BOB VAN GORDER

Westbrook Drum Corps

1910 - 1985

Seventy Fifth Anniversary

FEATURE CORPS
LANCRAFT FIFE AND DRUM CORPS

The Lancraft Fife and Drum Corps was formally organized in 1888. It was named after Ed Lancraft who owned an oyster business and who gave the corps their first continental uniforms. It is the oldest continuously active and competitive corps in the nation.

Lancraft won its first state championship in 1909 and since then has won 27 state, 4 national and 2 world championships. The Lancraft fifers have won the state title 21 times and its bass drummers have amassed 29 state titles.

The uniforms are the exact replica of the uniform of George Washington. So much so that Colonial Williamsburg hired Lancraft as their official drum corps for two years to supply authentic revolutionary music for their own performing militia. The fifes are the traditional wooden fifes and the snare and bass drums are rope drums of colonial times.

Lancraft has travelled by every means of transportation: car, bus, truck, train, trolley car (all the way to Worcester, Mass.), motorcycle (with drum strapped to the back of the driver), boat and jet plane. It has played in practically every town in Connecticut plus the states of Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Washington, D.C., Virginia and overseas in Ireland and Switzerland.

Because it is an ancient corps with Revolutionary War uniforms and music, its songs and traditions remain constant and so also its members remain active for many years. One such member was active for 50 years.

Lancraft has had a successful and glorious past and there is every indication of an even more glorious future.

PARTICIPATING CORPS

1. WESTBROOK DRUM CORPS
   Westbrook, Ct.

1a. CHARLESTOWN MILITIA
   Charlestown, Ma.

2. JUNIOR COLONIALS OF WESTBROOK
   Westbrook, Ct.

3. DEEP RIVER SRS.
   Deep River Ct.

4. NAYAUG ANCIENTS FIFE AND DRUM CORPS
   South Glastonbury, Ct.

5. OLDE RIPTON
   Shelton, Ct.

6. TAUNTON MINUTEMEN
   Taunton, Ma.

7. SAILING MASTERS OF 1812
   Essex, Ct.

8. SUDBURY ANCIENT FYFE AND DRUM COMPANIE
   Sudbury, Ma.

9. TOTOKET ANCIENT FIFE AND DRUM CORPS
   Branford, Ct.

10. CONNECTICUT BLUES
   Middletown, Ct.

11. VILLAGE VOLUNTEERS
   Delmar, N.Y.

12. LANCRAFT FIFE AND DRUM CORPS (FEATURE CORPS)
   North Haven, Ct.

13. NEW JERSEY COLONIAL MILITIA
   Morristown, N.J.

14. OLD GUARD
   Fort Myers, Va.

15. ANCIENT MARINERS
   Guilford, Ct.

(Participating corps cont'd)

16. DEEP RIVER JRS.
Deep River, Ct.

17. YANKEE TUNESMITHS
New York, N.Y.

18. STONY CREEK FIFE AND DRUM CORPS
Stony Creek, Ct.

19. PATOWMACK ANCIENTS
Arlington, Va.

20. MILFORD VOLUNTEERS
Milford, Ct.

21. MENOTOMY
Arlington, Ma.

22. CAPT. JAMES BUXTON
Uxbridge, Ma.

23. GERMANTOWN ANCIENTS
Danbury, Ct.

24. CHARLES W. DICKERSON FIELD MUSIC
New Rochelle, N.Y.

25. MOODUS DRUM AND FIFE CORPS
Moodus, Ct.

26. KENTISH GUARD R.I.M.
East Greenwich, R.I.

27. EAST HAMPTON FIFE AND DRUM CORPS
East Hampton, Ct.

28. CHESTER FIFE AND DRUM CORPS
Chester, Ct.

29. YALESVILLE JR. ANCIENTS
Yalesville, Ct.

30. MARLBOROUGH VOL. FIRE DEPT. JR. ANCIENTS
Marlborough, Ct.

31. UNION BRIGADE
Norwood, Ma.

(Participating corps cont'd)

32. HANAFORD'S VOLUNTEERS
Underhill, Vt.

33. YOUNG COLONIALS
Carmel, N.Y.

34. NEW JERSEY COLONIAL FIELD MUSIC
Morristown, N.J.

35. COGINCHAUG JR. ANCIENTS
Durham, Ct.

36. MARQUIS OF GRANBY
Granby, Ct.

37. MIDDLESEX COUNTY MILITIA
Arlington, Ma.

FRIDAY EVENING PROGRAM

7:30 P.M.

PLACING OF THE FLAGS.....with music by the
Jr. Colonials of Westbrook

FIFE AND DRUM CONCERT.....Hanaford's Volunteers
Patowmack Ancients
Middlesex County Volunteers
18th Conn. Regiment
[redacted] Hampshire Rebels

WESTBROOK DRUM CORPS — 1910

THE ORIGIN OF THE WESTBROOK DRUM CORPS

By Kenneth B. Morgan

In the winter of 1909-1910 a group of about twenty young men organized to form the Westbrook Drum Corps. Louis Pratt of Deep River, an unusually talented man and an expert fifer, drummer, and dance teacher, volunteered to come down to Westbrook each week to teach the fifers and drummers. At the same time he conducted a dancing class for the members, their wives, and sweethearts. The undertaking was a huge success - the girls were as enthused as the men.

At first the Corps was equipped with relatively small drums, but they soon acquired a full complement of "thunder makers", manufactured by the famous Eli Brown of Windsor and later of Bloomfield. Some of the beats learned that first winter were: "The Bruce Address", "The Grenadier March", "On The Road to Boston" and "Yankee Doodle". Later came "The White Cockade", "Battle Hymn", "Grandfather's Clock" and "Marching Through Georgia".

Louie Pratt developed an unusually talented Corps. The fifers were the musical Mansten brothers, "Ty" and George; the Holbrook brothers, John and Chapman, Alex Brooks, Gilbert Spencer, Irving Bohling, Charlie Clark, Fred Ames, Charlie Brainerd, and Lee Kelsey. Bill McCoombs and Paul Hoxsie joined later.

The drummers were outstanding. There were the Bloomfield brothers, Tom on snare, and Luther, along with "Happy" Burnham of the talented Clinton Burnhams, and Frank Palm on bass. Frank's son Albert was later to join, and he played both bass and snare. It was the opinion of many that Luther Bloomfield, " Happy " Burnham, and Luther Chapman of Centerbrook, were the greatest bass drummers in the lower valley. Certainly "Happy" and "Lute" were most entertaining to hear and watch.

In 1925 Richard Gustafson joined the bass drum section and would remain with the Corps for 50 years.

("Origin" cont'd)

The snare drum section was loaded with talent - men who never ceased practicing. It included Russell Stokes, one of the finest, who was a perfectionist by nature. Bill Boone, Paul Post and Al Foerch were powerful drummers. There were also the brothers John and Bill Mulcair, John Doane, Evelyn Wright and Robert R. Morgan whose chief avocation was the Corps. He had been drumming from boyhood and was still at it at eighty.

William Wilcox was the first drum major, and his son Henry was later to join and become a fine snare drummer. Frank Hill was the second drum major, and he in turn was succeeded by Stanley Griswold.

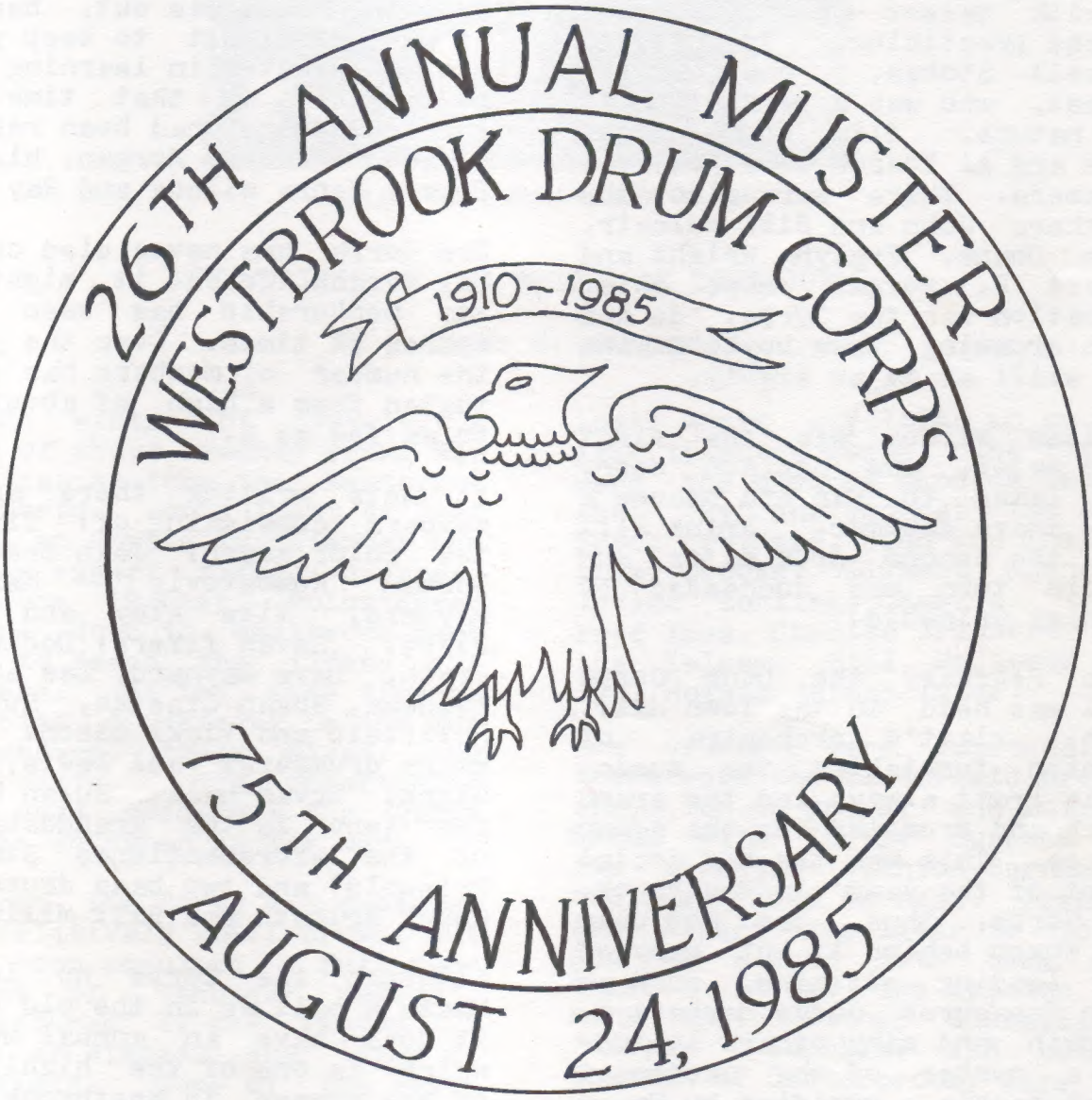
Each February the Drum Corps Ball was held in the Town Hall, with Platt's orchestra of Clinton furnishing the music. Louie Pratt always led the grand march and prompted for the square dances. This was the big social event of the year in Westbrook. The Corps, thus, had not only the women behind it but many of the leading citizens, such as Town Treasurer Judge Herbert M. Baldwin and many others including a number of the Quotonset Beach people, typified by Mr. & Mrs. William O. Goodman and the Wilson family of Chicago and Westbrook.

Near the end of his drumming days Bob Morgan was very concerned that the art of ancient drumming might die out, because it was difficult to keep young men interested in learning the rudiments. At that time the snare drummers had been reduced to four - Robert Morgan, his son Tracy, Henry Wilcox and Ray Post.

The Corps has never died out as Mr. Morgan feared it might but its membership has been very sparse at times. Over the years the number of members has fluctuated from a high of about 26 to as few as 6.

At this writing there are 18 members consisting of: five in the color guard; Jean Bradley, Norman Kumbatovic, Marilyn Maynard, Mike Aley and Lisa Wiles. Seven fifers; Dodie McGrath, Dave Maynard, Lee and Jo Zuidema, Susan Ciastko, Suzanne Holifield and Vicki Olson. Four snare drummers; Paul Lewis, Dave Clark, Bryan Hall, Susan Kieffer (who is the granddaughter of the aforementioned Stanley Griswold) and two bass drummers; Chuck McGrath and Bill Miller.

Although the Corps no longer hosts a ball as in the old days, it does have an annual muster which is one of the highlights of the summer in Westbrook. It also attends many parades and musters beginning its season in March with the Evacuation Day Parade in South Boston, Mass. and ending with the Christmas Torch Light Parade in Saybrook.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